



Nebraska

Epidemiology

Nebraska Health and Human Services System P.O. Box 95007 Lincoln, NE 68509-5007
Epidemiology Reports are available on the Nebraska HHS Website at: <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us>

Fax

TO: Nebraska Influenza Surveillance Laboratories

FROM: Thomas J. Safranek, M.D., State Epidemiologist, 402-471-2937

DATE: November 7, 2005

RE: Confirmation of Positive Rapid Diagnostic Tests for Influenza

Public health officials in Nebraska have initiated their annual influenza surveillance program. A key surveillance system involves quantifying the influenza laboratory testing on a weekly basis at the laboratories around the state which perform influenza diagnostic testing. This surveillance system assesses the volume of influenza testing being performed and the number of tests that are positive.

It is important that laboratories and health care providers understand the limitations of these tests. When the actual amount of influenza in a population is low, the likelihood of false-positive tests increases. This is particularly important in the case of rapid diagnostic tests (RDT) which have decreased specificity compared to viral culture.

To address the likelihood of false-positive influenza tests, for a limited time during the early part of the influenza season the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL) will perform confirmatory viral culture testing on specimens submitted by our influenza surveillance laboratories from patients who had a positive RDT for influenza. NPHL will be forwarding to our influenza surveillance laboratories the materials needed for the collection and shipment of specimens to be cultured for influenza.

A high oropharyngeal throat swab or a nasopharyngeal swab/aspirate placed in viral transport media is necessary for the performance of an influenza culture. Specimens submitted for influenza culture to the NPHL using a NPHL requisition will be performed at public health expense. A copy of the requisition is included with this message, or can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/cod/nphltestrequisition.pdf>. Specimens should be forwarded to the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory at UNMC at the address noted on the requisition. For questions, contact your local health department, or contact my office at 402-471-2937.